

## 18. OCCURRENCE OF FLYING LIZARD (*DRACO DUSSUMIERI*) IN THE NILGIRIS

The distribution of the Southern Flying Lizard in the subcontinent has been recorded by J. C. Daniel (1983 THE BOOK OF INDIAN REPTILES P. 46). Its occurrence in Mundanthurai Sanctuary, South Tamil Nadu was recorded by Mangalraj Johnson (JBNHS 80, pp. 229-230). The habitat of the *Draco* according to Daniel is evergreen biotopes, arecanut, coconut and betel vine plantations in the plains. Mangalraj reported them in plantations of teak, neem and bamboo in Mundanthurai. I would like to add the Coffee/Cardamom plantations also to their habitat. They are commonly seen on Silver Oak (*Grevillea robusta*), and Indian Coral trees (*Erythrina indica*) of coffee plantations in one of the estates on the southern slope of Nilgiris. When I stayed in one of the old Bungalows of the Pilloor group

of estates in 1978 I have seen the *Draco* on the eave of the roof of this building. The bungalow is situated at an altitude of 1292 m MSL. This increases the altitudinal distributional range of this lizard up to 1292 m from 1000 m (3250 ft).

All the three specimens whose stomach contents I examined had white, and red ants. One stomach had in addition the remnants of a fly and another the mouth parts of a small beetle and a few small black ants. During my Western Ghats survey I have recorded this species from Silent Valley, Nilambur forests, Valar forest, Parambikulam, Thattakadu, Idikki, Periyar Tiger Reserve, Sabaramali Forests etc. from South. During 1980 when I visited Coorg I saw a specimen in one of the coffee estates at Sidhapuram near Mercara.

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## 19. A NOTE ON THE ASIATIC ROCK PYTHON (*PYTHON MOLURUS*) FEEDING ON THE SPOTBILL DUCK (*ANAS POECILORHYNCHA*)

On the early hours of 22nd May 1984, we were cycling down one of the dykes intersecting the marshes of Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur, Rajasthan in search of nests of resident ducks. We examined all the *Acacia* planted mounds near the dyke and were lucky to see a Python capturing and devouring a Spotbill duck.

The snake must have been waiting coiled

up on the mound, as it caught the duck entirely unawares. Soon after the capture the massive snake took to the water, and all that could be seen for a few moments was the tail half thrashing about above the water surface. Distressed over the loss of its mate, another Spotbill which was seated nearby incessantly kept uttering a series of alarm calls. All the herons and egrets perched on the trees around

### *MISCELLANEOUS NOTES*

silently witnessed the struggle between the duck and the snake. It took approximately an hour

for the Python to swallow its prey, after which it disappeared into the grass covered, waters.

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### **20. A COUCAL-PYTHON INCIDENT**

On the morning of 27th April 1984, at about 7.30 a.m., we were walking down the metal topped road running across the Keoladeo National Park at Bharatpur, Rajasthan. On both sides stratched the vast grassy wetlands dotted here and there with planted acacia trees. Suddenly one of us saw a black creature thrashing about in the midst of the marsh about 50 feet away from the road. We were puzzled to see a ring of about 20 Egrets and Pond Herons watching the creature, which was apparently in great distress. On closer examination, it turned out to be a coucal *Centropus sinensis* (Stephens) being strangled by a young Python *Python molurus* (Linnaeus) about 125 cm long.

For the next two hours we observed the one-sided battle between the reptile and the bird. The snake tried its best to swallow the bird but, being a young one, all its efforts were

in vain. From a distance of a few feet away, we observed the python widening its gape now and then to the utmost extent, yet the prey could not be swallowed. At one stage, it indeed appeared that the bird would be injected but the bill acted as a hindrance.

At the very beginning the coucal showed signs of life but eventually, it died due to the relentless strangling. The snake coiled itself around the bird and squeezed it to such an extent that the normally stout bird looked slender.

Finally at 10 a.m. the python let go its prey and disappeared into the water. Obviously the coucal was too large for it to tackle.

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